



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE ARRESTS 19-YEAR-OLD ON ALIEN SMUGGLING CHARGES *53 illegal aliens, including an infant, discovered in Las Cruces mobile home*

LAS CRUCES, N.M.—A teen-aged alien smuggler who allegedly charged a \$2,000 smuggling fee was arrested here by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents Tuesday.

Mario Rolando Hernandez-Cervantes, 19, a citizen of Mexico, was arrested by ICE special agents conducting surveillance near a mobile home park in the 200 block of Ironwood.

Hernandez-Cervantes and 11 others were observed entering a 1997 Chevrolet Tahoe about noon Tuesday outside a mobile home. The special agents stopped the vehicle and determined that everyone in the vehicle, including Hernandez-Cervantes, was in the U.S. illegally.

The ICE special agents then investigated the mobile home where the individuals had been staying and discovered 42 additional illegal aliens. Some of them had been waiting there for as long as two weeks. Everyone appeared to be in good health, said agents, who found food and water in the mobile home.

Steve Mendoza, resident agent-in-charge of the ICE Las Cruces office, said the investigation has linked Hernandez-Cervantes to a major alien smuggling organization operating in southern New Mexico.

“We’ve put an end to this smuggling network,” said Mendoza. “Dismantling this type of organization is a major priority for ICE, which is committed to holding alien smugglers, or “coyotes,” accountable for their illegal activity.”

Those arrested include: 39 adult males, seven adult females, and seven juveniles from 1 to 16 years old. ICE special agents determined the aliens were from the Mexican states of Guanajuato and Michoacan. Several of those arrested had re-entered the U.S after having previously been deported, which is a felony. So far, all but two of those arrested have been returned to Mexico. Hernandez-Cervantes is currently in ICE custody; ICE will present its investigation to the U.S. Attorney for prosecution.

According to the ICE investigation, Hernandez-Cervantes was paid \$2,000 for smuggling each illegal alien; he rented the mobile home for \$695 per month, and transported the illegal aliens once in the country.

He is scheduled to have an initial appearance in federal court here at 9 a.m. today.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.